

LETTER
TO THE
EPISCOPAL
CLERGY

SCOTLAND,

Being the sincere and humble Advice of an
unknown Friend.

*It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than
for evil-doing. I. Pet. III. 17.*

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To the Episcopal Clergy in Scotland: The sincere and humble advice of an un- known Friend.

Reverend Gentlemen,

I have beheld, not without compassion, and a fellow feeling, the sufferings to which you have been exposed these 12 or 13 years by gone; how so great a number of you were with your Wives and Infants, Thrust from your Charges, houses, and Livings, by Insolent Rabbles; and the greater part of the remainder thrust out by Shoals under a form of Law, and others by the Presbyterian Judicatures, where the Civil government permitted it; and to what miseries many of you have been exposed, especially in the late times of Famine and Dearth. I have observed with what contempt and insolence your Presbyterian Brethren have treated you; what care they have taken to marther your Reputation and good Name, to render you odious to the people over whom they have influence; to make you pass for men of no Conscience and no Principle, for Hereticks and Schismaticks, yea for Atheists and Blasphemers; and by all Arts and means to hinder so much as a Toleration to be granted you, tho' no share should be allowed you in the Benefices from which they have Rabbled you; and how they have industriously studied to make you as the filth of the world, and the offscourings of all things unto this day.

If I were to Judge of men and Causes by the Lot that attends them in the world, I should entertain hard thoughts both of you and your Cause; and conclude that you merited all the reproaches, contempt and hard Names, wherewith your brethren Load you; and observing after such a Shipwack, Vipers to fasten upon you, should think with

the Barbarians, that you were Murderers, whom Vengeance would not suffer to live. But knowing your Integrity and the Justice of your Cause, and that God Judgeth not as man doth; nor according to the outward appearance, I am Led rather to consider the methods of Divine Providence, and the Christian and Spiritual use that ought to be made of them.

If all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution; if shro' many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; If they that would reign with Christ hereafter, must first suffer with him here: if our Lord assures us, they are blessed who are persecuted for Righteousnes sake; when men shall revile them, & persecute them shall say all manner of evil against them falsely for his sake; & bids them rejoice & be exceeding glad, for great is their reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before them. If this was the Lot which our Lord chuse for himself in this world, and in this gave us an example that we should follow his steps; if his Apostles had the same Lot and rejoiced in it, and were made as the filth of the world and were the off-scourings of all things; then certainly no body should judge hardly of you because of your outward state; and you your selves ought to rejoice in it.

If it trouble and grieve you, that your Reputation and your good name is murthered, and that not by Heathens, but by the professors of Christianity, and the great pretenders to Purity of Religion; and that not by the People, but by the Ministers who influence them and have the key of their affections and Passions; and that they Proclaim you guilty of the greatest Impieties, Atheism, Blasphemie, Heresie &c. and that in the most publick places, and before the most eminent persons, and so discredit your Ministry: Consider him that endured such Contradiction of Sinners, that ye be not weary nor faint in your minds. Our Lord Jesus was Poor in the world; not only as to house and wealth and friends, but also as to reputation and esteem, and that even of Sanctity and Holiness. All the peoole had a great opinion of his forerunner John the Baptist, and counted him a Prophet; but had little or none of Jesus; he past for a friend of Publicans and Sinners, for a deceiver of the People, for a fool, (he hath a Devil and is mad, why hear ye him?) Yea for a Blasphemer and a destroyer of the Law. They who traduc'd him most and were his greatest Enemies, were the Ministers of Religion,

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the Priests, the Scribes and Pharisees. His Apostles were treated after the same manner, and you see with what Spirit and temper they bare it
 Cor. 4. 9. &c. ‘We are made a Spectacle to the world and to Angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but yee are wise; we are weak, but yee are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And Labour, working with our own hands: being reviled we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off scourings of all things unto this day. Let us remember then “The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have called the master of the House Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household. If Innocence and Sanctity it self had no reputation, why should we who are grievous Sinners and deserve to be the object of dishonour and contempt take it ill to meet with it, & to be so treated by men. Sanctity it self would needs thus have no reputation, that it might confound our shameful Hypocrisie which makes us seek before men, the Glory and praise of the Goodness and virtue which we neither have nor practise. Let us not murmur then if we meet with reproaches, who are most worthy of them; for tho’ men may accuse us falsely of this or the other Crime, yet our Sins before God do deserve the utmost shame and reproach. Therefore *deny your selves, even as to reputation in the World (Striving in the mean time to live so unblameably and innocently, as that none may have just ground to reproach you) take up your Cross and follow Jesus.*

Ay, but it troubles you, they should proclaim you *Atheists and Blasphemers*: Labour in all things to have a good Conscience, Let this be your rejoicing the testimony of your Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, yee have your Conversation in the World. For the will of God is, that with well doing ye may put to silence the Ignorance of foolish men. Let it be a Small matter with you to be judged of men. Yea saith St. Paul, ‘I judge not my own self; for I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord. The Atheist says, *there is no God*. Perhaps there are more Speculative Atheists in this Last and worst Age, of the world, than was ever in former Ages. And there are none who contribute more to this than

the multitude of Hypocrites, men who set up greatly for a form of Godliness, and are altogether void of the power and life of it. But the practical Atheists do sadly overspread all places, who profess to know God, but by their works do deny him. If any proclaim you for Atheists, let your life and conversation witness against them. Be not troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Blasphemy is to speak evil of God, or to ascribe to the Creature his incomunicable perfections. To utter that of God, that highly derogates from his Righteousness, or Goodness, or Truth, or any other of his perfections. This may be said to be either by Word and Deed, as the Damned in Hell do, and bold prefligate Sinners here on Earth, and as S. John Rev. 16. 9. 11. tells of those on whom "the Angels poured out their Vials, that they Blasphemed the God of Heaven, because of their Pains, and Repented not of their Deeds. Or this may be done by those who do not avowedly despise God, but have a form of Godliness, denying the Power thereof, and yet are Blasphemers of him; as the Apostle tells us of the Perilous Times, and the Men that shall come in the last days. 11 Tim. 3. 1, &c. Such are they who act the greatest Villanies under a Cover of Religion, and subvert Kingdoms under the Bond of a Solemn Covenant; and Christen their Projects and Contrivances with the Name of the Cause of God, and ascribe their Successes in the most Villanous actions, to an Answer from Heaven. Like to those with whom God expositulates by his Prophet Jer. 7. 9. "Will ye Steal, Murder, and Commit Adultery and Swear falsely, and come and stand before me in this House which is called by my Name, and say, we are delivered to do all these Abominations. And the abounding of this last sort of Blasphemies, does not a little increase the Number, and harden the hearts of the former sort; while they see Men pretend a Zeal for God, and under that cover, Act injustices beyond the Heathens.

Some also are ready to affix Blasphemie upon others, when they maintain Doctrines or Opinions, from whence either really or seemingly, Blasphemous consequences may be inferred, tho' in the Judge-
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ment of all Divines, they are not to be charged with such Consequences, when they do expressly disavow and disclaim them; and would reject the Sentiments, if they perceived that these Consequences did follow from them. After this manner the *Lutherans* do charge the *Calvinists* with hainous Blasphemy, in asserting that "God from all Eternity decreed to Create the far greatest part of Mankind, that he might damn them, and might thereby manifest the Glory of his avenging Justice: and that he sends the Light of the Gospel to those Reprobates only the more to blind and harden them. This, say the *Lutherans*, is as much as to say, that God is not Just, nor Good, nor True: which the *Calvinists* do deny, and if they saw this to be a clear Consequence, they would undoubtedly reject the opinion from whence such a Blasphemous Consequence did follow. If after this manner the Presbyterian Ministers affix upon you such an Impputation in this last fence, they must either make appear that so hard a Consequence follows upon some opinion own'd by you (which I think it will not be easy for them to do) and that this very consequence is own'd by you likeways, or else be held for false accusers, for which I pray God give them Repentance & Forgiveness.

The great thing to be minded by you is the Right use of the Calamities you are trysted with. *In the day of adversity* (saith Solomon) consider. Look back then to your former state, consider the Present, and provide for the Future.

We have Seen and Heard of Strange and Various Revolutions in the World, among all Ranks and Sorts of Men. Servants riding on Horses & Princes walking asservants upon the Earth: we have heard in our days of whole Churches pluck'd up and rooted out, their Oratories thrown down, their publick Worship suppressed, their Pastors banished, &c. as in Bohemia, France and elsewhere. You have met with your share in these publick Calamities, with which the Justice and Goodness of God thinks fit to exercise Wretched and Sinful Man, and have been treated with some measure of Severity and Contempr, by those who profess to agree with you in Doctrine, Discipline and Worship, and to differ only in form of Church Government and some few Rites of Worship, and have been thrust from your Offices and Livings. We have no reason to think that the foreign persecuted Churches and Pastors were greater sinners than other Churches and Pastors who still enjoy

enjoy peace and quiet, or than those who thus treated them. Neither can I think so of you. On the Contrary, not only Charity, but Justice, from the particular knowledge I have of the Integrity and worth of many of you, do oblige me to think otherwise. That in such a number of Ministers as make up the body of the Clergy of this Church, it might have been that some here and there, were no ornament to their Character, is nothing strange, and what is to be met with but too readily in all Churches. But that the body of the Episcopal Clergy, before the late Revolution, were, generally so speaking, a Sett of Ministers, as eminent, according to their different measures, for learning, integrity, probity, parts, and a careful discharge of the duties of their office, as perhaps any other Church in the Christian world can boast of at this day, is a Testimony which I think the generality of unbias'd people in the Nation, yea even among the Presbyterians, will not deny them.

But notwithstanding of all this you have no reason to *justify* your selves, but sincerely to acknowledge and lay to heart your iniquities, that God may be justified, when he thus speaketh in his Rods; and be clear when he judgeth. It cannot be denied but that there is and hath been an unspeakable degeneracy in this Church and Nation from the life and Spirit of Christianity, and the Ministers of Religion, in whatsoever party, cannot certainly wash their hands, and say, they are free of the guilt of this. Yea they have rather cause to dread, lest this be chiefly laid to their Charge. God has been pleas'd to empty this Church from Vessel to Vessel, to see if we could be purified from our Lees which yet do still cleave to us. You have great need then to lay to heart what hand you may have in all this; and with Daniel to confess humbly unto the great and dreadful God, "That we have Sinned and committed iniquity and done wickedly and Rebelled by departing from his precepts and from his Judgements; and that righteousness be- longeth unto him, but unto us confusion of faces &c. Dan. 9.

As to your former State then I speak even to those whose Conversation has been blameless before men, much more to those, if there be any such, who have given offence; by not having their Conversation as becomes the Gospel and the Ministers of it;) it ought to be laid to heart how rashly in these latter Ages men rush into that *Holy Office*, without due consideration had of the great scope, the weighty importance of it, and without having the necessary dispositions, grates and qualities
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that may fit them for the right and profitable discharge of the same, and without that purity of intention that is needfull for the underakeing of that Office. *Simon Son of Jonas Lwest thou me?* Saith our Lord. They ought to consider how far they may have strayed from the great end of that Office in the exercise of it; how guilty they may have been in seeking themselves, and their own things, more than the things of Jesus Christ.

As to the Present state, let every one observe the righteousness of Gods dealing with him, look on himself as most unworthy to be Gods Minister and Ambassador, because of his unfaithfulness and negligence in the service of his Lord and Master; Let him be grieved that he has not more contentedly born his chaffisement and profited by it, that he has not become more humble and self-denied, more mortified to all Temporal things, and his heart more set upon things Eternal. Let him check his anxiousness to be from under the Crosse, and learn to Bless God for it, and to be well pleased with it. And when once you come to be perfectly contented with your condition, and to bring forth the peaceable fruits of it, your Heavenly Father may then see it fit to free you of the Rod. Learn also not to put your Trust in men and in Princes, and in Humane and worldly politicks, nor in the Revolutions of States & Kingdoms. For "mean men are vanity, and great men are a Lie, and being put in the ballance they are altogether lighter than Vanity. The Lord disappoints you in your hopes from the world and from men, that no flesh may glory in his presence, and you may learn to trust in him only, and patiently to wait for him. Do not think that the main office of the Sacred Ministry consists in Preaching publickly in a Pulpit. That is now become the Theater of the World. You are not forbid to visit the Sick; to apply your selves to every one in private as they have need, and as you may see it profitable. But above all Labour sincerely to Preach the Gospel by your Lives; be clothed with humility, bear the Cross patiently, deny your own wills and your appetites, Love all men, have fervent Charity amongst your selves, follow the things that make for peace; do nothing out of strife or vain glory; eat not the bread of Idleness, being reviled, blest; being persecuted, suffer it, being defamed, intreat; render to no man evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariways blessing; and strive in all things to live as strangers and Pilgrims here, travelling to Eternity having your affections taken off from

from all things here below, and set on those things that are above. Above all things put on Charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

As to the future; if it shall please God to continue you still under the rod, bleis him for it, and be perswaded that it is best for you: If in his wise providence he shall alter your present state, and that you should come to be resettled in the legal exercise of your sacred office, consider seriously and impartially what special duties would be incumbent on you. What need would you have to watch against the temptations of prosperity, that you be not exalted in your minds, and vainly puff up, nor your hearts set upon earthly things! What need to redeem your time, to redouble your diligence in the work of the Lord, and to mind and prosecute the real scope of your office? How becoming will it be to treat your brethren, not as they have treated you, but in the *Spirit of meekness and Love!* For *Love covereth a multitude of Sins.* Avoid the contrary temper and Spirit (for it has confounded Christendom) and study alwayes to be in the Spirit of Christ Jesus. You may come to see also how necessary it will be to avoid the Spirit of a Sect and Party, and not to be fond of any of the distinguishing Tests of any Sect, of their human Forms and confessions of Faith, so as to oblige all, of Laical or Ministerial Communion with you, to Subscribe to these your particular forms, as the Confession of their Faith and the Standard of Christianity. The word of God contain'd in the Holy Scriptures is the Rule of our Faith; the things necessary to Salvation are there plainly set down; in other things we may bear with one another in a modest diversity of Judgement. And in these we cannot impose our Forms and Confessions on others, unless either we think the Composers of them infallible, or that all men have the same measure of understanding and judge alike of these things; or that we will needs force all to be of our opinion, or at least make them declare they are so; or that we think they cannot be true Christians, or at least Ministers of Jesus Christ, unless they firmly believe all the opinions set down in our forms and Confessions, as Articles of their Faith, all which are most unreasonable. But especially how careful must you be to instill into the Peoples minds a right sense of the Religion of Jesus Christ; to let them see, that the End of the Commandment is Charity, the love of God and their neighbours, without which all Faith and knowledge will profit them nothing; and that so long as they *Love self and the World,*

World, the Love of the Father cannot be in them; that therefore they must deny themselves, and take up their Cross, and follow the life and Doctrine of Jesus Christ, relying on his merits and grace, for Mercy, Strength and acceptance: and how must you watch against the Pharisaick Spirit and Righteousness either in your selves or others, which places Religion in little things, and omits the weightier matters of Gods Law, Righteousness, Mercy, faithfulness and the Love of God. This is a Spirit that prevails greatly in the World, among all Sects and parties (tho' it reigns more among some than others) and is the greatest Cause of all the Evils, Divisions, and Confusions in Christendom, and renders men most uncapable of *entring into the Kingdom of God* themselves, and makes them *shut it against those that would enter*. It is this that raises up that sort of men of which the world is now so full, which the Apostle forewarns us of; 2. Tim. 3. 1. &c. saying that in
 ' the last days perillous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of
 ' their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient
 ' to Parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce
 ' breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are
 ' Good, Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more
 ' than lovers of God; having a form of Godliness, but denying the
 ' power thereof; from such turn away.'

If what is here written be not unacceptable to you, it may be an Encouragement for more of this Nature, from the same, or a far better hand. But if it shall offend you, forgive me this fault, it being well meant by

Reverend Gentlemen, Your most sincere Friend, and Humble
Servant in Jesus Christ.

S. Matth. V. 16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.

Philip. II. 15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom shine ye as lights in the world.

I. Pet. II. 12. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

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